



CONSTANTINE:

A

TRAGEDY.



[Price One Shilling and Six-pence,]

CONSTANTINE

THE

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TRAGEDY

BY

THE

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CONSTANTINE:

A
TRAGEDY.

As it is ACTED at the
THEATRE-ROYAL,
IN
COVENT-GARDEN.

By Philip Francis. K.



L O N D O N :

Printed for A. MILLAR, over-against Catherine-street,
in the Strand. MDCC LIV.

CONSTANTINE.

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To the RIGHT HONOURABLE

The Earl of CHESTERFIELD.

My Lord,

I Did not dare, so coldly was this Play received by the Town, to ask Leave, in the usual Forms, to dedicate it to your Lordship. Its Fate was early determined, and in such a Manner, that I very little flatter myself, it can be worthy of your Lordship's Patronage, or may presume to boast it was once honoured with your Approbation. But as I may, probably, never have another Opportunity, certainly not in this Kind of writing, of publicly professing my Respect, my Esteem, I had almost said, my Affection for your Lordship, may I not be forgiven, if I thus dedicate, not the Play, but its Author; not his Poetry, but his Understanding and his Heart?

WITH Sentiments such as these, I dare assure your Lordship, you shall not be insulted with the usual, too civil, Language of Dedications. Yet I confess, I would gladly recover the Name of Dedications to its ancient Dignity, before they were prostituted, most absurdly prostituted, by the Author of the *Pharsalia*, when he dedicated to a Tyrant a Poem in Defence of Liberty. I

a

confess,

DEDICATION.

confess, I mean to praise; for honest Praise is not only one of the warmest Incitements to Virtue, but its most honourable Reward. Great Minds will receive it with their natural Greatness, and only little Spirits have an Affectation of refusing it. The Task, I own, is not without Difficulty, but when the Original is marked with strong and pleasing Lines of Life, a meaner Hand may preserve the Likeness. The Integrity of his Colouring, if I may be allowed the Expression, is of more Consequence, than the Glow and Richness of it. Dedications would then be like Pictures in Miniature, which the future Historian might draw out into larger Proportion, Grace, and Dignity.

LET me then have the Honour of informing your Lordship's Historian, that although your Youth perhaps was spent, among Pleasures, not ill-suited to that gay-er Season of Life (*neque tu choreas sperne, puer*) yet it was not lost among its too frequent Dissipations. Ancient and modern Languages, with an accurate and critical Knowledge of the English Tongue, its Harmony, Copiousness, and Variety of Expression, are not to be acquired without much Application. Nor could the greatest natural

ral

DEDICATION.

ral Abilities, not even your own, my Lord, have appeared in the most important Debates of the House of Lords, with such superior Strength of Reasoning, with Eloquence (in the true Character of Eloquence) at once pleasing and powerful, had they not been improved by all Advantages of Education.

To such Abilities were intrusted the Honour and Interest of the Nation in Embassies abroad, and the most important Employments at Home. How happily for IRELAND was the Possessor of them sent thither as Lord Lieutenant in that dangerous Crisis, the late Rebellion? One Part of the Nation, the natural Enemies of his Majesty's Government, were to be awed by Power, tempered with Lenity; the other were to be restrained in their Zeal of Loyalty, which though sometimes shewn, perhaps, with too much Warmth, hath ever been their Glory and their Boast. How happily the Goodness of your Lordship's Heart was mixed with the Wisdom of your Councils, the Gratitude of the whole People will for ever acknowledge. Long may you enjoy their Wishes, their Prayers for your Happiness. Long may you enjoy the Consciousness of your own Integrity, that nobly

DEDICATION.

refused a Vote of Credit, and an Offer of raising a Body of Forces, which you wisely foresaw would be an useless Expence to the Kingdom. What must be the Firmness, and Generosity of that Spirit, which is not to be seduced by Gold, intimidated by Danger, or corrupted by Views of enlarging its Power!

YOUR Lordship now seems determined (and surely the gallant Veteran deserves his Dismission) to retire from all public Business. Permit, my Lord, this honest Dedication, for well you know that Flattery would not desire it, to attend you to your Retreat, and with it be pleased to accept the sincerest Respect of

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most obliged

and most obedient Servant,

PHILIP FRANCIS.

THE
P R O L O G U E.

O'E R a soft Tale of well imagin'd Woes
The willing Tear with feeble Transport flows ;
But when the Muse in her own Griefs appears,
The storied Sorrows of a thousand Years ;
A nobler Tribute, than our Tears we pay,
Our Passions hear her, and our Hearts obey.

Such Scenes to-night—Oh ! for a Muse of Fire,
Great Shakespear, thine, our Author to inspire ;
Then fierce Ambition, Guilt, Despair, and Rage,
And frantic Jealousy should shake the Stage ;
Tyrants and Slaves her equal Wrath should find,
Her Furies haunt them, and revenge Mankind.

But where's the modern Spirit can sustain
The Weight of Greece, or draw the Roman Scene ?
Their Heroes seem of some superior State,
Great in their Virtues, in their Vices great ;
Here wild Ambition Earth and Heaven defies,
And there—Oh ! glorious Fate ! the Patriot greatly
dies.

Yet if, with modest Hope, our Author aim
At your Applause—for your Applause is Fame,
Let him, to-night, your wonted Candour find,
Oh ! be the Critic's Eye a little blind ;
And if to You, ye Fair, he pours his Heart,
To your Distresses gives his tenderest Art,
To Beauty, Virtue, and to You he sues,
As you inspir'd—Oh ! patronize his Muse.



EPILOGUE.

Spoken by

Miss BELLAMY.

WELL! you expect—so says the Taste in Vogue—
To these sad Scenes a laughing Epilogue!

But I'm untaught in every comic Grace,
Wit's bolder Mirth, or Humour's various Face;
Nor shall I dare, with your lov'd, mimic, Art,
Take off the Cit—the Beau—the Blood—the Smart.
Shall I the dear Coquet's sweet Trifling try?
Pish—as I live—be quiet—let me die—
Then, melt a Look—deliciously explaining
The double—no, good Faith! the single Meaning.

As for our Play—methinks, this tragic Plot
Might furnish precious Hints, for you know what—
To leave an Empress—tho' so wondrous chaste—
With a young Lover—two full Hours at least—
In our frail Times, this dangerous tete a tete—
In the first Act—had made the Play complete.

And then the Moral—ye, whose happy Lives
Are bless'd with rare Discretion—in your Wives;
When Trifles—light as Air—shall turn your Heads,
Ah! shun that naughty Trick—of separate Beds,
Besides the midnight—reconciling Billing,
Ah! think, how near was CONSTANTINE to killing.
But hush our Bard—

If should he hear us laughing, wont he say,
Your flippant Mirth,—good Ma'am—may damn my Play.
Then for my Sake—but I'm in such a Fright—
Well—I'll give out the Play—for Monday Night.



A New

EPILOGUE.

Written by a Person of DISTINCTION.

Miss BELLAMY's Illness prevented her speaking it.

IN all this Scene of Treason, Swords and Death
My Fright has almost ta'en away my Breath ;
And yet our Bard insists, that I must say
Something for him, and something for his Play.

Most of the Fair-ones sure must be contented,
And must approve the Part I've represented,
Who think these Characters no Stain to Life,
The duteous Daughter, and the tender Wife,
Who taste the highest Blessings, while they prove
The Husband's Fondness, and the Parent's Love.

Tho' I confess, there are of our sweet Sex,
Who, form'd to please, transform themselves to vex ;
Rebels to gentlest Sway, Foes to Restriction,
Whose chiefest Bliss is plac'd in Contradiction ;
Who think Obedience to the milder Will
Of a kind Parent, smells of Childhood still.
And that the Father should not be obey'd—
Not half an Hour—after the Portion's paid.

To such alone, whose virtuous Bosoms prove
Paternal Fondness, or connubial Love
Our Author freely offers up his Cause,
And let those generous Passions stand for Laws ;
By them he will be try'd ; if they acquit,
He's safe ; if they condemn, he must submit.



Dramatis Personæ.

CONSTANTINE	Mr. Barry.
MAXIMIAN	Mr. Sparks.
AURELIAN	Mr. Smith
ALBINUS	Mr. Ridout.
MARCELLUS	Mr. Stevens.
FULVIA	Miss Bellamy.
CORNELIA	Mrs. Barrington.

Officers, Licitors, Guards, &c.

SCENE CONSTANTINE'S Palace in Constantinople.



Advertisement.

IT is almost ridiculous, after the ill Success of this Play upon the Stage, to tell the Reader, I took Part of the Fable, and the Translation, if I remember rightly, of ONE only Line, from a French Tragedy, called MAXIMIAN. But all Concealments of this Kind are disingenuous.



CONSTANTINE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The EMPEROR's Palace.

AURELIAN *and* MARCELLUS *meeting.*

AURELIAN.

SPEAK; have I Leave to see her?

MARCELLUS.

Yes; my Lord.

AURELIAN.

But when? How soon? For did the Hour, Marcellus;
Ride on the Tempest's Wing, the Speed of Light,
Its Swiftneſs were too flow. Yet, yet ſhe comes not.

MARCELLUS.

What can theſe Transports mean? Are theſe Emotions
To tell the Empreſs, that her Lord returns
With Conqueſt to her Arms? Did Friendſhip ſend you
Its Meſſenger of Love? Did CONSTANTINE——

AURELIAN.

He ſent me not.

B

MARCELLUS.

MARCELLUS.

My Lord !

AURELIAN.

Nor do I come

A Messenger of Conquest, Joy, or Love.

MARCELLUS.

Then my worst Fears are true. Th' impetuous Passion
Flames forth again ; again MAXIMIAN's Daughter—

AURELIAN.

Is she not all her Sex's Pride would aim at,
Their various Arts of charming?

MARCELLUS.

Dear my Lord,

Tho' she were fairer, than th' ideal Beauty,
That warms the Lover's Hopes, or Poet's Fancy,
Yet shall the bright Temptation, (best Excuse
For human Frailty) melt away all Faith,
Allegiance, Honour, Duty ? Oh ! remember—

AURELIAN.

What ? That she now is wedded to another ?
Another breathes my Transports o'er her Bosom,
Sighs out my Love, and drinks, with raptur'd Ear,
The Vows, that once were mine ? If thou couldst charm
The Madman's Ravings ; bid the Heart be still,
When Passion shakes us ; or with Words of Wisdom
Pour on the feverish Sense the Balm of Health,
I then might listen to thee.

MARCELLUS.

Is this AURELIAN !

The Pride of Rome ! Th' Example of her Youth !
But I confess, this Language well befits
Your Commerce with MAXIMIAN ; a Spirit made of Fire,
Whose fierce Ambition, and whose fell Revenge,
(He knows no other Passions) vex his Soul,
As adverse Winds, and meeting Tides at Sea
Roll the wild Waves on Heaps.

CONSTANTINE. 3

AURELIAN.

Revenge! Ambition!

Whence can they rise? What Motives to enflame them?
Does he not share with our great Emperor
All but the Name of Empire, and its Cares?
What would a Father's Heart, howe'er ambitious,
More than to see the Homage of the Nations,
Paid to his Daughter's Virtues; to her Beauty?

MARCELLUS.

Her Greatness only brings to his Remembrance
His own was lost, when our late Emperor
Forc'd him to give her Hand to CONSTANTINE,
And, happily for Europe, wrested from him
Th' imperial Power. Since when, his Rage beholds
His Son, as the Usurper of his Throne:
Then, in his Zeal for the old Gods of Rome,
He hates him as a Christian. Should he tempt
Your Youth to join with his Despair, your Virtue,
I know the rich Reward.——

AURELIAN.

Look, where she comes.

A rich Reward indeed. I pray you leave me,
And, at some better Leisure, every Secret
Of Confidence and Friendship shall be yours.

[Exit MARCELLUS.]

AURELIAN.

And is it mine,—ye Powers, why am I destin'd
To throw Disorder o'er that loveliest Form,
To fill those Eyes with weeping, and that Breast
With Anguish, beyond Thought?

Enter FULVIA.

FULVIA.

AURELIAN, welcome.

Say to my Heart, my CONSTANTINE is well.
Give me the storied War, the Battle's Rage,

B 2

Tho'

4 C O N S T A N T I N E.

Tho' my Soul tremble at it. Shew my Hero
In all the bleeding Pride of glorious Danger,
How terribly ! adorn'd. But ah ! my Fears !
You do not feel my Transports. Down-cast Eyes !
Horror is in thy Face !

AURELIAN.

'Tis in my Heart.

FULVIA.

Where is my Lord, my Emperor ? Oh ! speak.
Is he a Conqueror ? Comes he Home in Triumph ?

AURELIAN.

Fame, Honour, Conquest, bind their Wreaths of Glory
Around his sacred Temples, and he comes
T' enjoy his Triumphs in his FULVIA's Arms.

FULVIA.

Why would you thus alarm me ? I'm a Woman
In Tendernefs and Love ; in all Things else
A Roman Spirit, and MAXIMIAN's Daughter.
Still there's a Fear—(is it too big for Utterance ?)
Heaves at your Heart. Such Silence speaks all Fears.

AURELIAN.

Could my Despair, could my Distraction tell you,
What my Heart feels this Moment ; how it bleeds ;
Your Pity would forgive me, tho' I stain
Your Father's venerable Name with Blood ;
Tho' I accuse—No—Honour, Faith, and Loyalty,
They only shall accuse him.

FULVIA.

Stop not thus.

Let not my Fears grow impious in their Wildness.
My Father—there th' alarming Tale began.

MAXIMIAN.——

AURELIAN.

Too impatient to resume
Th' imperial Purple, he so late resign'd,

Thinking

C O N S T A N T I N E. 5

Thinking the little Fame, my Youth hath gain'd ;
My Interest with the Legions ; my Command
So near the Person of my royal Master,
Might aid his Purpose, with unbounded Hand
Threw out Ambition's Glories to my View,
With half the Throne of Universal Empire.—

FULVIA.

While CONSTANTINE, your Emperor—while he lives ?
Where slept this fierce Desire or Power so long ?
What wakes it now to Madness ?

AURELIAN.

When the Rage
Of Battle ceas'd, and Victory no longer
Stood hovering o'er us with uncertain Wing,
My Lord MAXIMIAN ask'd,—almost demanded,
The Government of these new German Conquests,
For his once favourite Freedman, CAIUS LUCIUS.

FULVIA.

That gloomy Fierceness ! that unpitying Soldier !
But then, my Lord——

AURELIAN.

Perhaps, with some Impatience,
Refus'd the warm Request. Grief, Shame, and Anger,
The Consciousness of Greatness, and the Pride,
That saw the Soldiers mourn for his Disgrace,
The Time, the Place, each Circumstance, deep smote
Your Father's Heart, and wak'd Ambition's Fires,
Tho' long, but ill, suppress'd. Hence the Proposal ;
But when he saw my Soul start back with Horror,
And sicken at the Pomp of bad Ambition,
He shew'd me thee ; that all-excelling Form ;
Love threw his Colours o'er it (oh ! forgive me)
To turn my Faith to Treason.

B 3

FULVIA.

6 C O N S T A N T I N E.

FULVIA.

Hold, my Lord.

Such Insolence of Language ! Who am I ?

AURELIAN.

The Empress of the World ; the sacred Awe
Of grateful Nations, of imperial Rome,
The Pride, the Joy—You are the Wife of CONSTANTINE.
Yet oh ! remember, there was once a Time,
When other Loves approach'd you ; when MAXIMIAN
Approv'd my Passion, authoris'd my Vows,
And gave my Wishes Leave to gaze upon you.

FULVIA.

No more. What Proofs of this black Deed ? My Father !
Source of my Life.—'Tis Parricide to think it.

AURELIAN.

The Doubt becomes your Piety. Behold
This Sword ! A fatal Witness.

FULVIA.

'Tis not that,

My Lord's first Gift ; his bridal-morning Present :
I must not, dare not think it ; or 'twas given you
For some blest Purpose ; to protect my Lord,
When, Oh ! too prodigal of Life, he thinks not,
That Life is Love's and mine.

AURELIAN.

With this he arm'd

My fearful Hand ; with this he bad me strike,
(How shall I say) the Heart your Love delights in.
Then loud he cried, possess my Daughter's Beauties,
And share the World with me. I took it trembling,
Lest he might find some Slave, so lost to Honour,
As to obey his Guiltiness.

FULVIA.

My Lord,

If I have wrong'd your Virtue by suspecting—

C O N S T A N T I N E. 7

Yet Nature claims her Rights, and awful bids me
Not trust too lightly to an Accusation,
That brands a Father's ever-honour'd Name
With Perfidy and Treason. O, my CONSTANTINE,
Is this thy Day of Triumph? This Return
For all thy Toils to bless a thankless World?
How shall thy FULVIA meet thee? Shall her Heart
With other Pantings, than with those of Love,
Receive its Lord, and tremble in his Arms?

AURELIAN.

Oh! stop these soft Complaining. Even this Hour,
(Death sits upon its Wings, and fierce Revenge
Lashes its Speed) this Moment must determine
A Father's Fate, or——

FULVIA.

Husband's! How determine!
Am I the dire Reward, the Prize of Blood!
Horror on Horror! of my Husband's Blood!
Ye Powers, who make this Trial of my Weakness—
But, oh! what Form of Prayer—Heaven must not hear me!
Daughter or Wife—in Love or Nature impious:
In either Name a Force that pulls my Heart-strings.

AURELIAN.

Each Instant I expect him; for he comes
To regulate the Honours of the Day.
Meet him with Smiles, with unsuspecting Looks;
Throw your Caresses round him, and awake,
With Nature's Voice, th' Affections she inspires,

FULVIA.

Meet him with Smiles! Thou cruel, cold Adviser!
No; with these Tears (for what can stop their flowing)
Or with the louder Sorrows of Distraction,
'Till Nature hear my Cries thro' all her Works.

AURELIAN.

Oh! yet with calmer Temper: Sooth him, melt him,

B 4

With

8 C O N S T A N T I N E.

With Prayers, with Tears; and when you urge him
strongest,

Seem most to doubt; to disbelieve, to think
'Twas but a Start of Passion; of Ambition,
That Madness of the Brave. Let your Success
Insure the Peace of Nations; of the World;
And give you down to Fame a nobler Story,
Than yet your Sex can boast. [*Exit AURELIAN*]

FULVIA alone.

What Fame? What Story?

To violate th' eternal Laws of Nature,
Her dearest, first Relations, Child and Parent;
To be myself th' Accuser, or behold
My wedded Lord—Oh! yet forbid it, Love—
Stabb'd in my Arms, reproaching me in Death,
A perjur'd, faithless Wife. Distraction guide me,
Where the Heart cannot chuse, and Reason dares not.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Madam, my Lord MAXIMIAN. [*Exit.*]

FULVIA alone.

Now, my Soul,
Meet this new Trial firmly; this Dissembling,
That talks in Smiles, when the sad Heart's in Tears.

Enter MAXIMIAN.

FULVIA, kneeling to him.

Witness this pious Tender of my Duty,
How gladly I behold my Father's Presence!
Thus may I ever see the laurel'd Wreath
Circling his Brows with Glory. Sure, my Lord, [*She rises.*]
(Ah! whence that Coldness, that averted Look!)
The fierce and hardy Germans are a Conquest
Worthy the ancient Majesty of Rome.

MAXIMIAN.

How did they dare rebel? Ye Powers immortal,

Who

C O N S T A N T I N E. 9

Who form'd th' imperial City to its Greatness,
How are we fall'n! The Majesty of Rome!
Shall it be deem'd a Conquest, to have quell'd
A single Nation? This Day's idle Pomp
Be number'd with the Triumphs we have seen,
When the World sunk beneath us? But our Eagles,
That us'd to soar with Empire on their Wings,
Now bend their Flight, like Birds of meaner Plume,
To stoop at worthless Triumphs; while our Emperor—

FULVIA, *aside*.

Now, now the Cloud is opening into Thunder!

MAXIMIAN.

His Thoughts are Heavenward!—In his holy Zeal
For this new Sect, this Christian Superstition,
He has transferr'd th' eternal Seat of Empire,
From where the Gods had fix'd it, to this City,
Now honour'd with his Name. All-sovereign Jove,
Where are the Thunders that assert thy Godhead!
The Temples, where we offer'd to thy Name
The Vows of human Kind, can'st thou behold them
Defil'd, polluted, and not pour thy Wrath
Upon his Head, this Emperor of Christians?

FULVIA.

Oh! spare the dreadful Image. Gracious Heaven,
Throw your own Shield of Safety o'er his Life;
Protect him from the Schemes of fierce Ambition,
Unhallow'd Vengeance, and the midnight Treason,
That dares not rise to the fair Face of Day.

MAXIMIAN.

What would our Empress mean?

FULVIA.

Oh! shall the Sword—

It was a Soldier's Present to a Soldier—
To Deeds of Honour was it ever sacred;
Nor in the wild, tumultuous Hour of Fight
E'er stain'd its Lustre with a Coward's Blood,

But

10 C O N S T A N T I N E .

But with distinguish'd Slaughter swept the Field;
And shall MAXIMIAN, for less noble Purpose,
Unsheath its Terrours? He, who oft hath led
The Roman War to Conquest! He, whose Life
Should guard the Life of Empire!—Shall my Father—

MAXIMIAN.

Coward AURELIAN! Base, betraying Christian! [*Aside.*
Who dares accuse me?

FULVIA.

Sir, your Daughter must not,

MAXIMIAN.

My Daughter? No, my Empress, as it seems,
The Wife of CONSTANTINE. Thou young Ingratitude—
Can'st thou forget—But I'll not bid the Gods,
Th' avenging Gods, remember how I've lov'd thee.
Go, Parricide, betray thy Father's Age
To Cruelty and Tortures. When my Heart
Shall burst in Death, when my strong Sinews crack
In agonizing Anguish, let your Eye
Delighted see my Torments, and your Ear
Enjoy my Groans.

FULVIA.

Oh! save me! save me, Nature,
From the dire Scene; from Horrors to distract me!
But I'll offend no more; for even my Grief,
Distraction and Despair, shall speak the Language
Of Duty and of Love. Yet hear them speak,
And then imagine, that last Night in Sleep
I saw my Father's Hand bath'd deep in Blood,
His Son's, his Emperor's Blood! How did I rend
The Air with Shrieks, and on his bleeding Corse
Pour my distracted Sorrows! While my Tears
Flow'd fast—(they flow'd in no unreal Streams)
Such as you see them now.

MAXIMIAN.

I see the Visions

Of

C O N S T A N T I N E. 11

Of a disorder'd Fancy, that has form'd
Its own wild Images of Grief and Terrour.
If there be aught more real in thy Story,
Give me to know the Slave, who dares accuse me.

FULVIA.

Accuse! What Accusation! Shall MAXIMIAN,
The Glory once, th' Example of the Brave,
Be in his Age accus'd, and, Oh! for ever
Be number'd with the Guilty, and their Crimes?
Better be lost to Fame, for ever lost!
No Eye to weep your Memory, not even mine!
Mine shall be clos'd in Death, or wildest Horrour
Sit gazing on its open Sense for ever.

MAXIMIAN.

Wild as the Dreams of Madness! Tell me, Madam—
But I'll not chide you for th' unkind Suspicions,
These visionary Terrours have inspir'd:
They too shall pass away in this Day's Triumph,
And Peace return to thy affrighted Spirit.

FULVIA.

Oh! never, never. These imagin'd Terrors
To me are real Anguish and Despair.
Oh! hear me, Sir! [*Throwing herself on her Knees.*] Your
Purpose—should it prosper—
What Horrors shall alarm your waking Sense,
Dwell on your Sleep, and fright your Dreams to Madness!
The Tempests of the Night shall rage within you,
And, when you hear the Thunder, cold pale Fear
Shall sit upon your Heart; shall stop its Beatings,
And freeze the Stream of Life! O CONSTANTINE!

[*Rising.*]

While we are meditating Death, your Love,
Perhaps, is forming some fond generous Scheme,
To make your FULVIA happy, and to crown
Her Father's Days with Glory.

MAXIMIAN.

12 C O N S T A N T I N E.

MAXIMIAN.

Ha! Can CONSTANTINE

Add to MAXIMIAN's Glory? Did there need
This second Outrage? Are my old Years thus,
O Curse of Age! insulted by my Child?

FULVIA.

Am I your Child? Will you and Nature own me?

MAXIMIAN.

Wer't thou not every Joy to every Sense,
That pours the Passions here? And now, Ungrateful—
Yet you can weep—Those Tears--can they be false ones?
How gladly would thy Father's Love believe them?
How gladly think, thou Fondness of my Soul,
Some Villain's Arts have wrought upon thy Weakness
To do this Act of Outrage on my Heart?

FULVIA.

Have I then wrong'd you?—How my Soul rejoices
In the sweet Hope! These, these, the Tears of Joy,
They, they alone, shall witness for my Truth;
They only shall implore Forgiveness for me.

MAXIMIAN.

I do believe them; they are Nature's Truth,
And thou the purest Bliss my Prayers e'er ask'd,
Or Heaven's large Bounty gave me. Pray, retire:
Dry these ill-omen'd Tears. Rely upon me:
MAXIMIAN never can forget his Honour!
Never forget a Father's Tenderness!

[Leads her out, returns and speaks.]

Then all is lost; Revenge, Ambition, Empire,
Or henceforth to be held by vile Dependance
On a weak Girl's Affection; by dissembling.
He, who has led to War the Fate of Nations,
And sway'd th' Imperial Sceptre!—O MAXIMIAN,
How are thy Glories wither'd! Is it Fear?
Let me not think it—Can the Love of Life,

A poor,

C O N S T A N T I N E. 13

A poor, precarious, casual Hour of Breathing,
 Subdue me thus? No, 'tis some nobler Passion:
 Unfated Rage, and Vengeance on the Slave,
 Whose Christian Fears betray'd me. If ALBINUS—
 Should he betray me too, my Fame, my Life——
 But that's a Trifle—my Revenge is lost.

Enter ALBINUS.

MAXIMIAN, *without looking back.*

Who's there?

ALBINUS.

My ever-royal Lord——

MAXIMIAN, *turning from ALBINUS:*

ALBINUS!

Start at the Presence of a Friend! What Power
 Can thus controul the Senses! My Confusion!
 It doubles on me—To be seen! surpriz'd,
 Thus, in my Soul's Disorder—in its Weakness!

ALBINUS.

I've stood thus long, my Lord, in silent Wonder——

MAXIMIAN.

There's an unsleeping Spirit here, ALBINUS,
 That ceaseless talks to Memory, and tells me
 I was an Emperor once.

ALBINUS.

A truly great one.

MAXIMIAN.

'Tis in my Dreams! It lives among my Slumbers,
 While Fancy, wild Creation's various Mistress,
 Forms my full Court, and bids them bend the Knee,
 As if my Frowns were Death. The Liçtors, Fasces,
 Th' applauding Senate and Prætorian Guards,
 Start at my Nod, to execute, to strike
 At my great Bidding. But the glorious Vision,
 Dazzling the Eye of Fancy, when I wake,
 Melts into Air, and I'm again a Slave.

ALBINUS.

14 C O N S T A N T I N E .

ALBINUS.

What Power can shake that Temper, which unmov'd
Rul'd the fierce Hour of Fight; like Ocean's God,
Who sits upon the Storm; and guides its Raging?

MAXIMIAN.

War is no more! O Rome, thy Arts are lost!
The honour'd Name of Soldier, and his Glory,
To shine in Arms, to dare the Front of Danger,
And follow Fortune through the doubtful Field,
Our Emperor needs thee not: His holy Warfare,
To quell the Passions, and subdue the Heart,
His Triumphs need thee not.

ALBINUS.

Call back, my Lord,
These Wanderings into Reason.

MAXIMIAN.

Why to Reason?

Will it not tell me I'm a Subject now?
To me as hateful as the Name of Slave.
Will it not tell me, that I dare not punish
A Villain who betrays me?

ALBINUS.

Sir! AURELIAN!

MAXIMIAN.

And shall the Gods of Rome behold me kneel
Beneath the Throne of CONSTANTINE? (his Name
Darts like a burning Fever thro' my Veins!)
And shall I enter into vile Debate
To clear my insulted Honour! God of Vengeance,
Why did I trust thy Cause—for it was thine—
To any other Hand? I should myself
Have struck the destin'd Sacrifice at thine
And great Ambition's Altar!

ALBINUS.

Hark! his Trumpets!

He

C O N S T A N T I N E. 15

He now is entering the triumphal Gate :

We must prepare to meet him.

MAXIMIAN.

Yes, and join
The universal Shout that calls him Lord,
Hail'd by his Christian Priests, right holy Flatterers !
The Conqueror of the World : While I, O Torture !
Beneath whose Name in War he rose to Empire,
Upon whose Ruins he has built his Fame,
Must wait upon his Fortune, and appear
To grace his Chariot-wheels, and swell his Triumphs !

ALBINUS.

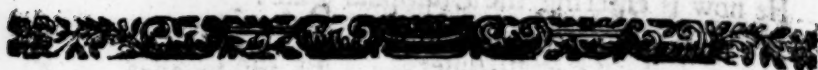
Let us not lose, my Lord, this noble Heat
In idle Threats and Rashness. Yet ere Night
Something may be resolv'd of glorious Danger,
Worthy MAXIMIAN, of his Fortune worthy !
When the same rapid Moment, in its Flight,
Shall form and execute——

MAXIMIAN.

Despair shall execute what Hope had form'd:
Fall swift, ye Shades of Night ; and all ye Powers,
Who wing the midnight Darkness, whom the Sun
With this his garish Light rebukes, appals,
Inspire our Councils, shed your Influence o'er them ;
Then if I fall—let the Gods answer for it. *[Exeunt.]*



A C T



A C T II.

TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION.

SONG of TRIUMPH by Roman Soldiers.

*God of Triumphs, God of War,
 Wait on his victorious Car!
 Crowns of Glory, Wreaths of Fame,
 Ambition's Temples bind;
 Tho' its impious Heroes aim
 To conquer and enslave Mankind.
 CÆSAR bids the World be free;
 His Glories, Peace and Liberty.
 God of Triumphs, God of War,
 Wait on his victorious Car!*

Lictors, Officers.

First Lictor.

Led forward by the Hand of laurel'd Victory—

Second Lictor.

Crown'd with the Love of Nations, and their Praise—

Third Lictor.

'The World's great Lord, the Lord of Empire comes:

Enter CONSTANTINE, AURELIAN, &c.

CONSTANTINE.

THUS far we thank your Love, our truest Glory,
 Our fairest Wreath of Fame. My noblest Triumph
 (Oh! were it possible) should bid the Nations
 Unite in mutual Amity and Peace,
 That all the Blessings bounteous Nature gives
 To different Climes, as sure her Wisdom meant,
 Should be enjoy'd by all. Take care, AURELIAN,
 That

C O N S T A N T I N E. 17

That every Honour, due to great Deservings,
Be paid these noble Prisoners. Tho' the Chance
Of War be fall'n upon them, yet like us
They fought their Country's Cause. Let us remember
How long their Valour held the doubtful Field,
And numbering o'er our Wounds, let them instruct us,
To reverence their Misfortunes.

AURELIAN.

Such a Conquest,
Where, nor the Vanquish'd mourn their Loss of Honor,
Nor Kings their Sceptres, nor the World its Freedom,
Is worthy Cæsar's Fortune. [*Pointing to them.*] While
the Nations,

From farthest India to the western Isles,
Pour at your Feet the Homage of their Treasures,
Rome sends a nobler Tribute, Vows and Praise,
Omens of glorious Hope, in which she sees
Her once victorious Ardor rise renew'd,
Thro' many a distant Age, from this Day's Triumph.

CONSTANTINE.

Too long, my Friend, has the wild Waste of War
Rag'd o'er the Earth: Oh! were the scept'red War-
riors,

Whose Lust of Empire sets the World in Arms,
Were they to see the Widow's keen Affliction,
Or hear the Mother's Shrieks in her Despair,
What could Ambition answer? But in Peace—
See, where its fairest Image comes to meet us, [*seeing*
the Empress.]

With all its Blessings round her.

Enter FULVIA, MAXIMIAN, ALBINUS.

O my FULVIA,
Next to my People's Happiness and Glory,
Thou art my Wreath of Victory, the Crown
Of all my Triumphs. Honour, Fame, and War,

C

Shall

18 C O N S T A N T I N E .

Shall witness for my Heart, its tenderest Joys
Dwell in thy Arms ; thou purest Bliss of Love.

FULVIA.

My Lord, my Emperor—all other Words
Wrong my full Joy ; my Love.

CONSTANTINE.

'Tis Eloquence
Beyond all Power of Words. It is the Language
My Heart best understands, and talks to thine.
Now, by the dear Delight of gazing on thee,
I swear, the Rage of War, its wildest Tumults,
Have but endear'd this soft Return of Love,
'This Meeting of our Hearts. But ah ! my FULVIA,
Whence is that Air of Sadness ! Fear and Sorrow
Are pale upon thy Cheek ! And now a Tear
Stands trembling on the Lustre of thy Eye !

FULVIA.

Amidst the general Joy, to pour my Soul,
To call you mine ; the World's great Master mine ;
His Conquests, Triumphs mine ; nay more, his Love,
Is such Excess of Bliss—yet, oh ! forgive me,
(Thou Lord of all my Thoughts) if aught ill-omen'd
Fancy or Fear, a Woman's weaker Passions,
Should mix themselves with thee.

CONSTANTINE.

But that I know,
Thou Softness of thy Sex, thy gentle Spirit,
What might I think ? What Terrors must alarm me ?
Yet tell me, tell th' Impatience, throbbing here,
Is it within the wide Command of Empire
To calm these tender Fears ? For what is Empire,
Why have I conquer'd, why this Day of Triumph,
But that my FULVIA may accept its Glories,
Laid at her Feet, in Homage to her Beauties ?

FULVIA.

CONSTANTINE. 19

FULVIA.

Her matron Virtue, rather, and her Love;
They may accept; may feel the Joys of Greatness,
Because the Gift is yours. Yet, midst its Glories,
Can I be perfect happy, while I see
Your cold Looks there? [*Pointing to MAXIMIAN.*]

While my divided Heart,
Divided between Tenderness and Duty,
Trembles for both.

MAXIMIAN *aside to ALBINUS.*

Ay; now she tells him all;
Now she describes (O well-dissembled Terrors!)
The fearful Deed; now she protests her Love,
And now with pious Seemings (Goddess Nature,
Dares she profane thy Name, and call me Father?)
Pleads for my Life—O young Hypocrisy—

CONSTANTINE *to FULVIA.*

With what Delight
Has my Soul listen'd to thy pious Sorrows?
Nor shall they plead in vain. My Lord MAXIMIAN,
What can I pay you back, in rich Return,
For Transports such as these? You gave her to me,
You made her Beauties, made her Virtues mine,
And bless'd my Soul with Love. If large Ambition,
Its scept'red Honours, its imperial Sway,
Can speak me grateful; take, divide them with me:
Besides th' unhappy Gift I late denied you,
Resume the sacred Purple; let the World,
Rul'd by your Wisdom, learn the Arts of Peace,
Or conquer'd by your War, make Rome immortal.

MAXIMIAN.

There was a Time, my Lord, I thought Ambition
The Spirit of the Gods, the Soul of Heroes;
But these white Years, which Time hath pour'd upon
me,

20 C O N S T A N T I N E .

Have quench'd its Ardors. These war-wearied Limbs
Wish for Repose ; to lay their feeble Strength
Beneath the peaceful Shade, which this Day's Triumph
Spreads o'er the Earth ; there, in an old Man's Warfare,
To talk of freezing Nights, and burning Days,
The Toils of Glory, Sieges, Marches, Battles,
And animate our Youth to Deeds of Honour,
Be now my sole Ambition.

FULVIA to CONSTANTINE.

Tell my Heart,
How to express these Transports ; or let Love,
In its own Language, thus ; in this Embrace
Pour forth, at once, its Gratitude and Joy.

CONSTANTINE.

With equal Rapture, equal Joy inspir'd,
My Soul meets thine. Thus could I hold thee ever,
Transported thus, and gazing o'er thy Beauties,
With Wonder, as with Love. But let us not
With impious Carelessness forget his Praise,
By whose right Arm we conquer'd. In his Temple,
The only God of Victory, we'll offer
The banner'd Trophy, and the Spoils of War,
In monumental Praise. Then turn to Earth
Our future Cares, with Liberty and Peace,
(Best Use of sovereign Power) to bless Mankind.

[Exit CONSTANTINE, FULVIA, AURELIAN.

MAXIMIAN. ALBINUS.

MAXIMIAN.

Was it of such slight Moment to provoke me ?
Did he so little dread MAXIMIAN's Anger,
That he has granted to a Woman's Tear,
What he denied to me ? For this the Legions,
Whom I had led to Conquest, saw me bend
My Spirit to the Earth, confess his Power—
Saw me refus'd a light, unvalued Trifle,
Scarce worth a Woman's Tears.

ALBINUS.

C O N S T A N T I N E. 21

ALBINUS.

But now in Recompence,
He offers half his Empire.

MAXIMIAN.

No; 'twas Insult;
(You saw it plain) contemptuous, purpos'd Insult;
His Insolence of Triumph, that his Courtiers,
His Christians, might enjoy their Master's Pride,
And my Dishonour. But, it seems, in Recompence
He offers half his Empire. Could his Word
Make me despotick Monarch of Creation,
His Gift, I would disdain it. My Ambition—
Shall it from him receive its sullied Honours?

ALBINUS.

This talking Heat, this loose Intemperance,
Is this MAXIMIAN's Vengeance? But be sure,
Suspicion is abroad; it marks your Steps.
Would you insure these Threats, which now are Air,
Keep your Eye constant; let no Passion shake it,
No Colour change your Cheek; open your Face
In Smiles, and let your Tongue flow loose in Flattery;
Go to their Christian Temple—

MAXIMIAN:

What! to hear
Their sainted Hymns, in pious Harmony,
Thrill'd thro' a Eunuch's Throat? Their holy Min-
strelsy
Suits not my Taste. Give me a Soldier's Musick,
Sung by the Voice of War, with Discords in it.
Or must I hear our Roman Jove blasphem'd,
His Godhead ridicul'd in cold Harangues,
That talk, I know not what, of holy Patience,
That must forgive the Man, who dares to wrong me.
Doctrines for Slaves and Cowards.

22 C O N S T A N T I N E .

ALBINUS.

Yet, my Lord,
What if the Empress (we may well expect it)
Or should AURELIAN tell this fatal Secret,
We must with Boldness meet the Accusation,
And throw it back upon them. If, my Lord,
You would have Vengeance—

MAXIMIAN.

If!—I will, ALBINUS.
This Christian Emperor, and his favourite Slave—
Shall he enjoy his Perfidy in Safety?

ALBINUS.

Yet would you kill him, where he feels most sensibly,
Beyond the Pains of his own fancied Hell,
Strike at his Friendship, his high-boasted Loyalty:
Make CONSTANTINE suspect him, nay, believe him
A Villain and a Traytor. There are Witnesses,
There are, my Lord, for Things impossible.
What think you of MARCELLUS?

MAXIMIAN.

What? His Friend!

ALBINUS,

His Friend. And, then, who better can betray him?
Who better be suppos'd to know his Heart?
Not to amuse you longer—This, his Friend,
And some of higher Note, bold, Roman Spirits,
Fond of the ancient Privilege of Triumphs,
And high in Mirth, which I had rais'd with Wine,
With Javish Wit condemn'd the Emperor's Conduct
In the late War, and ridicul'd his Conquests.
I had them seiz'd, confin'd them, told the Emperor,
With some Expressions, some loose Hints of Treason,
Which Men in Wine might possibly forget.

MAXIMIAN.

Methinks, I see your Purpose, and it charms me.

ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

I shall, by CONSTANTINE's Command, examine them.
If fair and friendly Methods fail to win them,
Tortures shall make them speak, as I shall prompt them.
Then with some well-wrought Circumstance of Jealousy—

MAXIMIAN.

Of Jealousy!

ALBINUS.

What other Power can make him
Suspect the Man he loves? Or will he listen
To other Crimes? Ambition shall be Virtue,
And Treason seem Ambition. Then, my Lord,
All other Passions have their Hours of Thinking,
And hear the Voice of Reason. This alone
Breaks, at the first Suspicion, into Frenzy,
And sweeps the Soul in Tempests.

MAXIMIAN.

But its Pangs—

Those you forget—Do they not rend the Heart?
Shall I not hear him groan?

ALBINUS.

You shall, my Lord,
For all its fiery Seeds are in his Temper.
When Honour, Justice, Reason, bid him act,
No Being firmer; but in all his Passions,
The Whirlwind's Wildness is not more inconstant.
When he (you must remember) and AURELIAN,
This boasted Friend, were Rivals for your Daughter,
Friendship, Esteem, and often-vow'd Affection,
In the first Start of Jealousy were lost.
Will he rage less, when the imperial Greatness
Shall add its Pride; when the wrong'd Husband's Honour
Brings all its nice Suspicions to enflame him.

C 4

MAXIMIAN.

24 C O N S T A N T I N E.

MAXIMIAN.

And when my Eye, when my Revenge, is fated
With gazing on his Pangs; when his full Sense
Can entertain no more of Pain and Anguish;
Then, in the Triumph of my Soul, to tell him,
His Wife was innocent—Ah! Who was innocent!

ALBINUS.

Is this MAXIMIAN? This th' unshaken Spirit?
Let not the Soldier see it; let not Rome,
Who thinks you, like her Gods, above all Weakness.

MAXIMIAN.

Yet tell me, can I say to my Revenge,
Be thou my Daughter? To this fierce Ambition
Bequeath my Power, or bid it to inherit
My Name and Honours? Can his deepest Groans
Charm my transported Soul, like those sweet Sounds,
That call'd me Father? She is all my Children.

ALBINUS.

You are, my Lord, the Master of your Fate.
It was not mine, th' Ambition or the Vengeance,
That prompted this great Deed; not mine the Glory,
Had it succeeded, to restore, O Jove,
Thy violated Shrines, and to Mankind
The Worship of their Reason; uncontroll'd
By slavish Fears, and ill-imagin'd Terrors.
Nor mine the Danger, if this much-lov'd Daughter—

MAXIMIAN.

All that is left me of the Name of Father!

ALBINUS.

In some loose House of Dalliance should betray you.
I am not known thus honour'd with your Friendship;
I pay to CONSTANTINE a Courtier's Flattery;
Am thought a Favourite; and Oh! profess,
Forgive me, Gods, a Worship I detest.
I shall not, trembling, kneel before his Throne,

And

CONSTANTINE. 25

And live with Infamy, or die a Traytor.

MAXIMIAN.

First perish all Affections ; every Instinct,
That breathes these Feelings thro' the Parent's Heart.
'Tis past ; the Conflict's over, and Ambition—
Methinks, I see the radiant Goddess come,
And, like a Soldier's Mistress, to my Arms,
Painted with Blood ; how fiercely sweet her Beauties !
This Night, ALBINUS, you command the Palace,
And when he sleeps—Oh ! shall MAXIMIAN kill
A sleeping Enemy ! Is this the Soldier ?
Is this th' Ambition, that would rule the World ?
Oh ! Shame, Shame, Shame ! What End, however
glorious,

Can justify such Means ? But not my Cause—
'Tis thine, O Rome, thy ever-living Fame,
The Capitol, and all its throned Gods,
They strike the Blow ; they bid the Victim bleed.

[*Exeunt.*



ACT



A C T I I I.

FULVIA.

WITH what paternal Tenderness he sooth'd me!
 With every dear Assurance, that his Heart
 Abhorr'd such Cruelty. Then earnest press'd me
 To ask the Emperor to make AURELIAN
 Commander of his Guards. Now, now, my Soul,
 Whence are the ceaseless Fears that shake thee thus?
 Whence are these strange Forebodings?

Enter CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE.

Why, my FULVIA,
 While the full Voice of Triumph, o'er thy Name,
 Swells higher into Rapture; while the Bowl
 Pours forth its purple Spirits to thy Beauties,
 Why seek this Solitude? Why shun the Joys,
 That you alone inspire? How has my Love
 Unwittingly offended? Does MAXIMIAN,
 (Why startled at his Name?) Does he believe
 My Friendship insincere? Why does your Eye
 Gaze with so soft an Earnestness upon me?
 And now it melts into a mingled Stream
 Of Tenderness and Sorrow!

FULVIA.

'Tis because
 This is, perhaps, my last, last Look of Tenderness,
 And all the rest is Sorrow.

CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE. 27

CONSTANTINE.

By our Friendship,
Its mutual Trust and Confidence of Heart——
Or shall I urge the Husband's sacred Rights?
No; I disclaim all Rights, but those of Love:
Then, in the Name of all its chaste Endearments,
Its holy Raptures, its mysterious Joys,
Tell me thy Fears; tell me thy Sorrows, FULVIA:
I have a Right of Love to share them with you.

FULVIA.

Why did I move you thus? O Sir, forgive me!
It may be, 'tis the Weakness of my Sex.
But they, who hate our Faith, revile its Worship,
And treat its pure Simplicity with Scorn,
Are they fit Guardians of your sacred Person,
The Lord of our Religion? When I see
These Worshipers of Jove, whose dire Example
Can justify even Treason, can my Heart,
Even in thy Arms, in your's and Love's Protection,
Can it speak Peace and Safety to its Fears?

CONSTANTINE.

How amiable those Fears! Tho' form'd by Fancy,
Their Colouring is of Love! Yet are they not,
[Turning to her.]

(Whate'er their Gods) the noblest Worth of Rome,
And in their Breasts that great Divinity,
Their Country's Love?

FULVIA.

Let them enjoy your Bounty:
Let every Honour their Ambition aims at,
Reward their Worth. But not to them alone
Your Life's expos'd: This ever-open Palace,
Even to the meanest, boldest of Mankind,
Unfolds its Gates!

CONSTANTINE.

28 C O N S T A N T I N E .

CONSTANTINE.

Are they not all my Subjects?

What have I done? What Acts of Tyranny,
What violated Laws, what bold Oppressions
Invade their Rights, that I should fear their Presence?
O Misery of Princes, when they dread
Whom most they ought to love! You know, my

FULVIA,

You know your Power is Sovereign o'er my Will;
Yet, pr'ythee, do not make a Coward of me.—
Oh! spare my Fame, nor brand it with Ingratitude
To them, by whom that Fame may be immortal!

FULVIA.

Yes, thou Unkind, these Tears—I will obey you—
Shall flow no more! My Heart shall beat no more!
I will repress these Terrors; will not start
Even at the Shrieks of Murder—Oh, my Brain!
See there, my Lord! It hovers o'er your Head!
A Poniard streaming Blood! The goary Drops
Glare thro' the midnight Darkness! Earth and Heaven!
That Hand!—O Nature, universal Parent,
Whose is that Hand? Does Mercy dwell in Heaven!
I'll gaze no more—Oh! hide me in thy Bosom,
Lest my Brain turn, and I run mad for ever.

CONSTANTINE *aside*.

Sure this is more than Fancy; more than Fear!
They are the Words of Fate! Awake; look up:
All shall be well. But these, the Sons of Riot,
Whose bold Intemperance hath alarm'd you thus,
Shall they not feel my Rage?—Be sure ye shall—
The Vengeance of my Love.

[Turning back, as if speaking to them.

FULVIA.

And can their Groans,
When Life is on the Rack, and stretch'd with Pain,

Their

CONSTANTINE. 29

Their Tortures ease my Heart? Think you, these Tears
(I would restrain them) flow for their Intemperance?
Does not this Wildness, this Distraction tell you,
What my Tongue cannot utter?

CONSTANTINE.

If the Danger
Be mine alone, and aim not at my Love,
Let it descend in Thunders on my Head;
Let it appear in any other Form,
Than in thy Grievs!—There my Soul sinks in Weak-
ness——

And in thy Fears I feel my Heart a Coward.

FULVIA.

And yet, a little longer, hear! Oh! hear me!
Is there not one among our Christian Chiefs,
Loyal as brave; the rising Hope of Rome;
The Glory of the War, the Soldier's Praise,
The Soul of all their Actions? Would you give them
A General worthy of them; or in War
To lead them on to Conquest, or in Peace
With liberal Spirit to reward their Toils,
Give the Command of the Prætorian Cohorts
To your AURELIAN, and in him alone
You place a Guard of Virtues round your Person.

CONSTANTINE.

Oh! why those Tears? You do not need their Aid
To bid my Heart obey you. Could you doubt,
(I must reproach you) could you doubt your Power,
And did you doubt my Love? But the Request
Is due to my AURELIAN, and to Friendship.

Enter MAXIMIAN.

MAXIMIAN.

Friendship! A Commerce between Fools and Knaves
Of sordid Flattery, and weak Believing.

30 CONSTANTINE.

Had not the gracious Gods in Mercy sav'd you—

[To CONSTANTINE.]

FULVIA.

Sav'd him! From what?

MAXIMIAN.

His Friends: From the dire Schemes
Of deepest Hell; for where, where else can Treason,
That aims its Dagger at the Life of Princes,
Where else can it inhabit?

FULVIA.

Sir! of Treason!

That aims its Dagger at the Life of Princes!

CONSTANTINE.

Why do you thus oppress her Sex's Weakness?
You fright her gentle Spirit into Frenzy.

FULVIA To CONSTANTINE.

Now let me claim your Promise. Let AURELIAN
Command the Palace-guards: Let him assemble
All who are firm to Honour and Allegiance,
All who are true to Loyalty.

MAXIMIAN.

AURELIAN!

Command the Palace-guards!

FULVIA.

Is he not honest?

Why do you start? Is he not true to Honour?

Does he not love my Lord? Is he not loyal?

MAXIMIAN.

So I once thought MARCELLUS. He seem'd honest:
Of Honour much he talk'd; of Friendship much;
(He was AURELIAN's Friend) and much of Loyalty.
O CONSTANTINE, thy Clemency of Temper—
How has it been abus'd! Now, Sir, let Justice
Assume a firmer Spirit. As for me,

Tho'

C O N S T A N T I N E. 21

Tho' my own Blood were tainted ; tho' the Child
Of all my Love—should she fall off from Goodness,
In spite of Nature's powerful Throbbings here,
This Hand should vindicate thy Wrongs and mine.

C O N S T A N T I N E.

What strange Insinuation ! Can a Father
Delighted view such Images of Horrour
No more, my Lord, of this mysterious Language—

Enter A L B I N U S.

Or you, A L B I N U S, give me all the Story ;
Its every Circumstance, its deepest Guilt.

A L B I N U S.

My Lord M A X I M I A N——

C O N S T A N T I N E.

Why do'st look at him ?

Why with that Air of Anger and Reproach ?

A L B I N U S.

Because it better had become his Wisdom,
To thank high Heaven in Silence for your Safety,
Than thus to rend your Heart, where it must feel,
Most sensibly, the Pangs of Love and Friendship.

C O N S T A N T I N E.

Friendship and Love ! Why are they nam'd with
Traytors ?

In my A U R E L I A N's Friendship for M A R C E L L U S,
I feel for his Distress. But why my Love ?
They did not dare—'tis impious to believe it——
They did not dare to violate that Temple,
Where Virtue dwells with Beauty. But M A R C E L L U S—
What had his Age, his Wisdom with such Crimes !
Could his Ambition ?—No, some secret Villain
Of bolder Hopes—By Heaven, that Look confirms it !
Oh ! give him to my Rage, my Vengeance give him ;
The Justice of my Love.

F U L V I A

32 C O N S T A N T I N E.

FULVIA aside.

Alas! my Father!

CONSTANTINE *to* FULVIA.

Why do you tremble thus? Why does your Eye
Melt into Tears? Thy Husband's Love is round thee;
His Arms thy soft Security. ALBINUS,
Give me his Name; nor let me ask again.

ALBINUS.

There is, my Lord—Why is it mine to name him?—
In horrid Violation of all Faith,
Allegiance, Gratitude——

FULVIA *to* ALBINUS.

ALBINUS, stop

This dreadful Preparation. Hear him not;

[*To* CONSTANTINE.

Or, ere you hear, resolve no Act of Blood
Shall stain this Day of Triumph. Oh! let Mercy
Add to its pious Joys an holier Sacrifice,
Than could we set Arabia's Hills on Fire,
And waft their mingled Odours up to Heaven.

CONSTANTINE.

Each Moment that delays my just Resentment,
Is a new Wrong, an Injury to thee.

[*Turning to* ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

My Lord——

CONSTANTINE.

No more; nor trifle with my Anger.

ALBINUS.

Then hear—O Virtue, Honour, hear it not!—
This Traytor's Name—this Traytor is—AURELIAN.

CONSTANTINE.

Ye sacred Powers of Friendship, hover o'er me!
MAXIMIAN, I speak to my astonish'd Spirit!
My FULVIA, tell me 'tis impossible:

Or

C O N S T A N T I N E. 33

Or say, what Crimes, what Horrors I've committed,
That Honour, Wisdom, Virtue (sure AURELIAN
Possess'd them all) should arm themselves against me!
But shall the Oaths of Traytors; they, who own'd
The purpos'd Guilt of Murder; shall their Oaths
Weigh down a Life of Friendship? Tell me, Sir,
(For I will know) what Hell-invented Arts
Thus wrong the Man I love?

ALBINUS.

What Arts, my Lord!

I hope, my Honesty is unsuspected.

CONSTANTINE.

Who shall be unsuspected? Who is honest,
If my AURELIAN's false?

MAXIMIAN.

Here, CONSTANTINE;

Thy guardian Genius cries aloud, beware:
No farther tempt your Fate; inquire no more:
This is the utmost Limit of your Happiness:
Here you may stop with Honour; all beyond
Is Misery and Shame.

[CONSTANTINE looks at ALBINUS; as com-
manding him to speak.]

ALBINUS.

Sir, I obey you;

But 'tis a Tale so full of Fear and Wonder,
Perhaps, of Falshood too, that I could wish
No other Ear might hear it.

CONSTANTINE to MAXIMIAN:

Good my Lord,

Leave us alone. My FULVIA's gentle Spirit
Will gladly quit the Scene. One little Hour,

[Turning to the Empress.]

D

(How

34 C O N S T A N T I N E.

How sadly due to Justice, and to Friendship)
And all the rest is yours; is Love's and yours.

[He leads her out.]

MAXIMIAN *aside.*

'Tis now your Cause, ye Gods, and see it prospers.

[As MAXIMIAN is going out, he seems strongly agitated, gazing earnestly after his Daughter.]

CONSTANTINE, *observing it.*

Starting! confus'd! The stern MAXIMIAN tremble!
While from the fiery Fierceness of his Eye
A Look of wild Compassion at the Empress
Shot forth its Softness.

ALBINUS.

Tho' MAXIMIAN's Manners
Are of the sterner Kind, he has an Heart—
No Father softer. To behold his Daughter
In such unwonted Agonies of Sorrow—

CONSTANTINE.

Oh! she is all her Sex's Tenderness!
I've known her weep to hear a well-feign'd Tale
Of one, who fell from Honour. If AURELIAN—
If he's a Traytor, are they not most lovely,
These pious Sorrows of Esteem and Friendship?

ALBINUS.

Friendship, Esteem, I thought were manly Virtues,
Too firm for Woman's wayward, wandering Spirit.
But if the Empress, Sir,—

CONSTANTINE.

The Empress, Sir!
Why is she nam'd? Why these licentious Hints
Against her Sex? Say, wherefore is her Name
Insulted with their Weakness, with their Frailties?

ALBINUS.

Insulted, Sir! Long may you think her virtuous;
Long may she live untainted, unsuspected.

CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE. 35

CONSTANTINE.

Untainted! Unsuspected! Think her virtuous!
Roman, take heed. Tho' I believe thee honest,
And love that Soldier's Plainness in thy Manners,
Yet dare not, for thy Life—By my just Rage,
Thy Life shall answer for a Thought, that wrongs her.

ALBINUS.

Sir, I obey you gladly; for I know not
A greater Curse to any honest Heart,
Than to think ill of others.

CONSTANTINE.

Ill of whom?

Not of my Wife? my FULVIA? Is she not
A noble Proof, where Men may see, and wonder
At Woman's perfect Worth? Still, still thy Looks
Are darken'd o'er with some mysterious Mischief!

You are a Christian; Truth is your Religion;
You are a Soldier; Honour's your Profession:
You were my Father's Friend; he lov'd, esteem'd
you:

By his great Name, by every sacred Power,
(If aught be sacred now) Allegiance, Honour,
Let me conjure thee, tell me thy worst Meanings.

ALBINUS.

It was my Sense of Honour and Allegiance,
That prompted me thus far. Were I a Courtier,
I might have learn'd (not thus abrupt and bold)
With silken Language to have cloth'd my Purpose.
But, Sir, I am a Soldier, rough, and simple,
And now in plain, blunt Honesty must tell you—
Yet if the distant Fear can shake you thus,
Will not the glaring Certainty of Shame—

D 2

CONSTANTINE.

36 C O N S T A N T I N E.

CONSTANTINE.

What uninvented, unimagin'd Tortures
Have I to dread? My Heart is on the Rack:

ALBINUS.

Would I could give it Ease. Alas! my Lord,
You saw MAXIMIAN; saw the Agitation,
That shook his Frame. It was the Father's Fondness
Labouring to disbelieve against Conviction.
But such the Proofs—sure they were strong indeed,
If he condemn'd; if he could think her guilty.
And yet a moment's Pause. There is a Circumstance
That throws its Light—its Light of Hope around us.
Did she this Morning, Sir, the Empress ask you
To make AURELIAN Captain of your Guards?

CONSTANTINE.

She did.

ALBINUS.

Your Wife! your Empress, Sir? your FULVIA!

CONSTANTINE.

What means this passion'd Repetition? She;
FULVIA; my Wife.

ALBINUS.

To place him near your Person!
Sure, not with much Intreaties?

CONSTANTINE.

Yes; most earnest.

ALBINUS.

Then Hell's Intelligence is true.

CONSTANTINE.

Now, tell me,

Why did you ask?

ALBINUS.

What did I ask, my Lord?

In this Confusion Memory no longer
Holds its firm Seat.

CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE. 37

CONSTANTINE.

I'll tell you then. You ask'd me,
Whether my Wife with strong Intreaties press'd me
To make AURELIAN Captain of my Guards.

ALBINUS.

Oh! my dear Lord forget it, lest th' Idea
Murder your sweetest Slumbers, and unfix
The seated Throne of Reason; for they swore,
(When sure the Soul speaks Truth) in Death's last
Pangs,

When wide Eternity was opening on them—
They swore your Wife had promis'd, even with Tears,
With every Art, and Subtlety of Woman,
To make the bold Request.

CONSTANTINE.

Why? wherefore bold?

ALBINUS.

I cannot—must not tell you—Sir, they swore,
That his Attendance on your sacred Person
Might with more Ease; more frequent Opportunity—

CONSTANTINE.

Ha! dare not for thy Soul. One added Thought
Carries such Ruin, such Perdition with it——

ALBINUS.

And yet what Harm, my Lord? Their frequent Meet-
ings,

No Doubt, were pious ones: to give Success
To our new Faith, and propagate its Doctrines.
Such as this Morn—but that, perhaps, was Zeal;
'Twas Friendship's Warmth; to tell of your Return.

CONSTANTINE.

What of this Morning? Where? What frequent
Meetings?

38 CONSTANTINE.

ALBINUS.

Here in the Palace, two full Hours, at least,
The Empress was in private with AURELIAN.
Jocund he seem'd, as one, who gain'd some Point
Of highest Moment. Doubtless, then he urg'd
Th' unwary Princess to this bold Request;
And such his Form; such Shews of manly Virtue—

CONSTANTINE.

His Form! Why that deceive her? But this Morn-
ing—

See her in private, two long Hours, and more!
Leave his Command; leave that officious Zeal,
With which he ever waited on our Person?
Leave them? for what? For a religious Council?
For holy, pious Meetings?

ALBINUS.

Dear my Lord——

CONSTANTINE.

She was most just; most faithful to her Promise.
With more than Woman's Arts; with Tears, Distrac-
tion;
With frenzy'd Terrors, with the Shrieks of Murder;
With fancy'd Visions—All ye Powers of Hell,
Where could she learn? Where was she practis'd
thus?

ALBINUS.

In Truth, 'tis somewhat strange. Yet still, my Lord,
Appearances, most probable, are oft
Most false. Truth is of simpler Kind.
And unperplex'd with Circumstance. AURELIAN
Has every Shew of Worth; is brave and wise,
And tho' he lov'd the Empress, 'twas before,
That Marriage made her yours.

CONSTANTINE.

Oh! well remember'd.
Yes; we were Rivals once, and sure his Passion
Flam'd

CONSTANTINE. 39

Flam'd high as mine ; impetuous even to Madness.
He lov'd to Madness—for he lov'd like me.
Fool that I was ; dull Fool. I thought his Friendship
Conquer'd his Love ; but, oh ! that Thought how
vain

My own Heart proves. Amidst these wildest Transports
My Reason hates ; my Glory sickens at her,
Yet still my Soul's in Love. With lavish Tongue
She dwelt upon his Praise—" The Soldier's Pride ;
" The rising Hope of Rome"—O blushless Wanton !
Thy Tears, thy Terrours now want no explaining,
Nor those strong Cries for Mercy.

ALBINUS.

Most amazing !
Is't possible ! These Transports for a Woman ?
A false one too ! To see you thus afflicted
O'ercomes thy Soldier's Firmness.

CONSTANTINE.

What Affliction ?
Thou see'st it not. 'Tis in my Heart ? my Head ;
'Tis in my Brain. Thro' every beating Pulse
It drinks my vital Blood. Thro' every Sense
It pours the gushing Sorrow fast upon me.

ALBINUS.

Had I suspected you could feel it thus,
Were it not better have conceal'd her Riots ?
Her loosest, most luxurious——

CONSTANTINE.

Villain, hold,
Is this a Scene, and for an Husband's Eye ?
By Hell, thou dost insult me. Hence ; begone.
Yet stay ; thy natural Fierceness may assist me.
If thou did'st ever know an Art of Cruelty ;
Or if, from Nature, thou abhor'st all Mercy,
Aid my Revenge. and let AURELIAN feel——

40 C O N S T A N T I N E.

Arrest him, seize him, drag him to his Fate,
That he may feel, if possible, the Pangs,
That rend my Heart. And thou, O Jealousy,
Invok'd, arise from thy profoundest Hell,
(To no mean Scenes of Horror art thou call'd)
Arise, and with thee bring thy kindred Fiends.
Revenge and Murder. I'll employ them all.
Vengeance and Blood ! O Woman ! Woman ! Ven-
geance !

[*Exeunt,*



A C T



ACT IV.

MAXIMIAN. ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

AND yet such Horrors I have fill'd his Heart with,
Methinks, even I could pity him. See him start;
Distraction in his Look, and wildest Rage——
Even when he weeps, for still he weeps her Name,
His softest Transport's Madness. Then he swears,
As with a Moment's Interval of Reason,
'Tis all a Lie, and with a Lover's Rapture
Talks o'er her Form, her Beauties, and her Virtue.

MAXIMIAN.

These Intervals of Reason may be dangerous.

ALBINUS.

Rather, like Lightnings flashing o'er a Storm,
They shew the Danger, and insure its Terroures,
His Jealousy, sagacious Self-Tormentor,
Prevents all farther Witness. Every Look,
Each trivial Circumstance of Joy, or Sadness,
That careless Innocence throws off the Heart,
Are now, by painful Memory, treasur'd up,
And brought in Proof with Shadows, with Suspitions,
Light as a Madman's Dreamings.

MAXIMIAN.

But AURELIAN——

How does he brook his Prison?

ALBINUS.

42 CONSTANTINE

ALBINUS.

Struck with Wonder,
He saw th' imperial Order to arrest him ;
Then cried--"O CONSTANTINE, most gracious Master,
" The Hand of Blood is on thee, and AURELIAN—
" It was my Guilt conceal'd the fatal Secret ;
" I am indeed thy Murderer." While the Soldiers
Stood wondering round ; I took him at his Word,
And call'd him Murderer ; with a chosen Party
Then dragg'd him to his Dungeon.

MAXIMIAN.

There to lie,
Where never Sun-beam pierc'd the solid Gloom,
Where rattling Chains, and Doors, that grind the Hinge
To let in new Distress, make hideous Concert.
There let my Vengeance find him. But ALBINUS,
The Emperor must not see his Wife.

ALBINUS.

He shall not.

We will not trust his Weakness, or her Power.

MAXIMIAN.

I will not trust his Rage. Do not his Passions
Start from his Soul in Tempests? Should he kill her—

ALBINUS.

My Lord, he dares not see her. Look, he comes.
Despair, and Grief, and Shame—No deeper Darkness
Dwells on the Face of Night, than on his Heart.
Stand and observe him : here.

Enter CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE.

Is there no Cure
For Ills like these? No wond'rous Art to heal
These Agonies of Sense? To endless Ages
Mark'd out a Thing of Vileness—Oh! my Heart!—
I must not dare to name? Shall all my Glories—
They

CONSTANTINE. 43

They are already lost—My Honours, Triumphs,
 Lost by a Woman's Falshood. I, who thought her
 The Excellence of Virtue, as of Beauty;
 That no unhallow'd Thought—O Woman! Woman!
 Tainted her Breast—to me so icy chaste,
 My Love's pure Kifs was cold upon her Lip;
 Even then her hot Imagination glow'd
 With lewd, luxurious Wishes. Hell and Devils!

MAXIMIAN.

If Duty, Sir, and Friendship may approach you—

CONSTANTINE *talking to himself.*

Her Death—What can her Death! Oh! poor At-
 tonement

For what I feel—a thousand Deaths at once.

Seeing MAXIMIAN.

Where is my Wife? my Wife! O Memory,
 Reflexion, Reason; ye were given to heal
 The wounded Spirit, not increase its Anguish.
 But tell me, how she looks. Her faded Cheek—
 Has it not lost that holiest Blush of Innocence?
 Bear with my Weakness—There was once a Time,
 Had Virtue worn the perfect Form of Beauty,
 Or cloath'd it in an Angel's Robe of Radiance,
 It would have look'd like her. Is she not chang'd?
 Is she not alter'd much? Haste, bring her hither.

[*To* ALBINUS.

I will myself, mark the first Starts of Shame;
 The guilty Colours, that must taint her Cheek.

ALBINUS *aside.*

Oh! would he stab her now, and give our Cause,
 With somewhat better Grace, to call him Tyrant.

[*Exit.*

CONSTANTINE *to* MAXIMIAN, *as he is going out.*
 Come back, my Lord, you shall yourself be Witness,
 Tho' my firm Nerves will tremble when I see her,

And

44 CONSTANTINE.

And my Eye start with Horrour, yet unheard
She shall not be condemn'd.

MAXIMIAN,

Has a Father's Love

Condemn'd his Child, and were the Proofs so weak
To need a second Trial? Then, my Lord,
Is your Heart firm? Its Beatings all secur'd?
Her Eye still holds its Lustre; Beauty still
Grows fresh upon her Cheek. When she shall weep,
When she shall wind her Sorrows round your Heart,
When Love's soft Language, melting from her Lip,
Charms you to hear, to pity, to believe her,
Your Soul may in its Rage reproach, upbraid her,
And in its Rage forgive her.

CONSTANTINE.

Ha! Forgive her!

The very Thought is Insult. Oh! should Mercy,
Fairest of heavenly Beings, descend to Earth,
Such as, when offering to the Throne of Grace,
The Sins of Human-kind, she weeps their Pardon,
Here she should weep in vain.

MAXIMIAN *aside*.

This only Means,—

Ye Powers, instruct, assist me to preserve her,
Your own, best Gift. But, Sir, her Fate is mine,
And should she die by any other Hand,
My great Revenge were lost. Could a Plebeian
Assume a Nobleness, his Birth denied him,
And kill his only Child, his lov'd VIRGINIA,
To save the humble Honours of his House?
And shall MAXIMIAN's Name be stain'd with Vileness,
Thro' Ages tainted with a Wanton's Frailty,
And shall he trust his Vengeance to another?

CONSTANTINE.

There is a savage Justice in thy Purpose
Horridly pleasing. I allow your Claim,

But

C O N S T A N T I N E. 45

But will you, Sir, be faithful to your Trust?
 Search deep into the bosom'd Seats of Pain,
 Where Life resides? Wilt thou, when Art grows tir'd,
 Renew its languid Rage? When the keen Sense
 Grows dull with suffering, wilt thou wake its Feelings
 Thro' every trembling Nerve? Wilt thou do this?

MAXIMIAN *aside*.

My Lord, I will. Dear Nature, hear it not,
 Or see the pious Meaning of my Vow.

CONSTANTINE.

Then take her to your Wrath; enjoy her Pangs,
 And charm me with the Story. If the Story
 (Return, my Lord) can charm me, sure the Sight
 Will give a fierce Delight, a gloomy Transport.
 I will assist you, Sir. Our mutual Wrongs
 Shall animate, inspire, relieve each other,
 Vary her Pains, and draw them slowly out.
 Then both together strike one Roman Blow,
 And both run mad for ever.

MAXIMIAN *kneeling to* CONSTANTINE.

Here, my Lord,

Behold me kneel; this Knee, that never bow'd
 But to imperial JOVE, supreme of Gods,
 And him, the fire-ey'd Power of War, Oh! hear me.

CONSTANTINE.

No; every Moment, that hath seen her wrong me,
 Impatient waits for Vengeance.

Enter FULVIA *behind*.

FULVIA.

Ha! for Vengeance!

My Father on his Knee! Then all's discover'd.
 Now to preserve him, or to share his Fate.

She kneels on the other Side of CONSTANTINE.

MAXIMIAN *starts and rises*.

FULVIA.

46 C O N S T A N T I N E.

FULVIA.

Mercy—not Justice, is the Throne of Princes;
For what is Power, tho' boundless and almighty?
A Deity of Awefulness and Fear.
But in the Whirlwind of its Wrath, when flies
The burning Shaft, if Mercy's saving Hand
Arrest its Flight; then, then we kneel and worship,
And mix our Praise with Gratitude and Love.

CONSTANTINE to MAXIMIAN.

Did she not talk of Heaven, and heavenly Beings!

FULVIA.

Not heard! Not look upon me! What's my Crime?
To ask his Life? The Author of my Being?
Is this a Fault? Then why, great Parent Nature,
Why hast thou pour'd, with such abundant Hand,
Thy filial Instincts thro' the Vast of Air,
The howling Desert, and the Ocean Stream?
Is he not still my Father? tho' his Crimes
Be such as CONSTANTINE alone can pardon;
For CONSTANTINE is sure the Prince of Mercy.

CONSTANTINE.

Is it in all the Stories of her Sex
To make this possible! Accuse her Father!
Add Parricide to Shame!

MAXIMIAN.

She has discover'd,
By some dark Means, that all her Guilt is known,
And conscious, that in me she must expect
A Roman Father's Wrath, she would destroy
The Object of her Fears. Then boldly hopes
To win the Heart of Love to hear her Vows,
To doubt, believe, forgive.

FULVIA.

Oh! Sir!

CONSTANTINE. 47

MAXIMIAN.

Away.

My Soul disclaims; thy Father knows thee not.

FULVIA.

Take; take my Life; 'tis yours; I here resign
Th' unhappy Gift; but, Oh! in Pity spare
My Innocence; my yet untainted Name.

Let not our holy Matrons hate my Memory,
Or the light Wanton dare, by my Example,
Indulge her Wanderings. By my Mother's Virtue—
She was her Sex's Chastity and Honour—

Will she not rise in Horror from her Tomb,
Fill the wild Air with shrieking, and demand
Her much-wrong'd Daughter's Fame?

CONSTANTINE to MAXIMIAN.

Bid them drag forth

Ling'ring in Death, fresh-bleeding from the Rack;
Then fitted for the Arms, the base AURELIAN.

[Exit MAXIMIAN.]

Oh! all ye Powers immortal, see she starts
At Mention of his Name. Spite of her Art,
Spite of the desperate Spirit of her Sex,
When first surpriz'd in Guilt, th' unwilling Blush
Glow on her Cheek, and flashes from her Heart.

FULVIA.

No more of Tears; no more of Woman's Weakness.
In her own Strength my Soul shall take her Flight
Above my Sex's Weakness. True, I started
At Mention of his Name, for then I saw,
First saw, the dreadful Train of Death and Treason,
That spreads around your Life, your Fame, your Empire.

CONSTANTINE.

For me thy Fears? My Danger? For my Fame?
Swear it—Oh! could'st thou swear, 'till I believ'd thee!

FULVIA.

48 C O N S T A N T I N E.

FULVIA.

Oaths would debase the Dignity of Virtue,
Else I could swear by Him, the Power, who cloth'd
The Sun with Light, and gave yon starry Host
Their chaste, un sullied Lustre; by the Fire,
Which burns unceasing on that sacred Altar,
Where first—O Memory—our Loves were plighted—

CONSTANTINE.

If you have aught to plead but Oaths and Tears,
Let me not kill thee uncondemn'd, unheard.
Answer me: Speak; unhesitating speak——
How his Name trembles on my Tongue—AURELIAN—
When did you see him last?

FULVIA.

This Morning, Sir;
Some Hours ere your Return.

CONSTANTINE.

Why? Wherefore see him?
What! for some holy, some religious Purpose!
Or was it to rejoice for my Return?

FULVIA.

No, thou Insulter, no. For thy Return!
What has it brought me home, but Wrongs and Outrage?
Yet for AURELIAN's Sake——

CONSTANTINE.

Ha! For his Sake!

FULVIA.

Sure not for thine, who dare insult me thus,
I condescend to tell you, that he came
In Loyalty—in Friendship, to inform me
Of such intended Horrors—that the Sword,
Which ten successive Emperors had worn—
Our first great CÆSAR wore it, and with Glory;
For with it Honour, Victory, and Fame
Were girded on his Thigh——

CONSTANTINE.

CONSTANTINE. 49

CONSTANTINE.

You do not mean
The Sword I gave MAXIMIAN ! Did I not——
Tho' then I mark'd it not, yet sure I saw
AURELIAN wear it. Was it not a Pledge
Of Friendship to your Father ? Did he give it——
Why ? For what Purpose, give it to AURELIAN ?

FULVIA.

O dire Necessity ! But I must tell you.
Fierce in Resentment of your late Refusal,
And burning to resume th' Imperial Throne,
Unwillingly resign'd——O, tell me, Nature,
How to proceed——may I invoke thy Name,
And call my Father Murderer ? Shall his Child
Open the bloody Volume of the Law,
Her Voice call forth the Ministers of Justice ?

CONSTANTINE, *aside*.

MAXIMIAN's Plots were ever stain'd with Blood.
His desperate Ambition, his Resentment——
But to accuse his Daughter ! Can her Shame——
For it must break my Heart——not torture his ?

FULVIA.

Look thro' my Life ; is there a Witness there,
To vouch this Guilt against me ? Or can Nature
At once start forward to th' Extremes of Vice ?
Look thro' the Days ; thro' every tender Hour,
Since first our Loves began ; did not my Heart
Number with thine its Beatings ? All its Joys
I shar'd with you ; its Sorrows were my own.
Are these the Proofs of Falshood ? Even in Justice
Reflect upon AURELIAN's early Worth——

CONSTANTINE.

Take heed ; be cautious ; for you tread on Fires.

E

FULVIA.

50 CONSTANTINE.

FULVIA.

Is not his Life a Copy, drawn from yours,
By Friendship's warmest Hand? You were his Fame,
His Glory, his Ambition, even his Virtue.
When late the Sword of War, with swift Descent,
Was falling on your Life, did not AURELIAN
Oppose his Bosom to the Stroke? Is this,
Is this to be a Traitor? This his Crime?

CONSTANTINE.

'Tis sacred Reason all, and heavenly Truth.
If she be false——how innocent she looks!——
The Sun is made of Darkness, and the Stars,
Are rayless as the Dust. If she be false,
Then Heaven, that pour'd these thousand Graces round
her,
Marrs its own loveliest Work, and mocks all Truth.
Oh! FULVIA, whither has my Heart been wandering
From Love and Friendship; Happiness and Thee?
But Love, impatient to resume his Bliss,

[Embracing her.

Rushes, with wonted Transports, to thy Arms,
Nor will he coldly wait to ask Forgiveness;
But in the calmer Temper of my Joys,
I will implore, and kneel, and weep for Pardon,
Swearing by Beauty's Power, no Thought hereafter,
Of cursed Jealousy, or base Suspicion,
Shall stain thy brightest Image in my Heart.

FULVIA.

Again I melt to Tears; the gushing Rapture,
Unutterable else, breaks forth in weeping.
Be these Embraces——Oh! believe them chaste ones——
My worst Resentments; these the only Marks
I e'er shall think, my Lord was once unkind.

CON-

CONSTANTINE. 51

CONSTANTINE.

Thou Wonder of all Goodness, as of Beauty!
But now, even now, perhaps, my best AURELIAN—
O Tyrant, savage CONSTANTINE—thy Friend
Expiring lies in Death. ALBINUS;

Enter ALBINUS.

Haste;

Fly; bring him to my Arms; tho' Shame, Confusion,
And fearful Friendship dare not hope for Pardon,
My FULVIA—She shall ask Forgiveness for me.

ALBINUS.

Whom shall I bring, my Lord?

CONSTANTINE.

Whom thou hast wrong'd;

Whom I have injur'd. Him, to whom I owe
My Life, my Love: Why need I name AURELIAN?

ALBINUS.

My Lord, AURELIAN's fled—

CONSTANTINE.

Ha! fled!

ALBINUS.

This Morning,

'Tis thought to ITALY; soon as he heard
MARCELLUS, by your Orders, was arrested.

FULVIA.

'Tis false; he is not fled. Why should he fly?
His Innocence—

CONSTANTINE.

Oh! FULVIA, was he innocent?

Whence then his Flight?

ALBINUS.

My Lord, we found this Paper

In his Apartment. Seeing the Address,
We did not dare to open it.

52 CONSTANTINE

CONSTANTINE.

"To the Empress."

Why should he write to Her? What direful Omen,
What Prefage this, that on my trembling Limbs
Hangs these cold, fearful Drops!—

[Reads, then lets the Paper drop.]

FULVIA.

What Passion thus
Shakes your firm Frame? Your Eye, now fix'd in Horror,
Stands motionless; and now its straining Sense
Starts into Wildness! Whence that rending Sigh
Of vehement Distress!

CONSTANTINE.

Away; begone.

There's Magic in thy Touch.

FULVIA.

My Lord! my CONSTANTINE!

CONSTANTINE, to ALBINUS.

Tear off her Hold; my Senses cannot bear her.
Th' Infection—now—it rises to my Brain!
Charms, Poisons, Incantations are about her,
The Sorceries of Beauty.

[Exit.]

FULVIA.

[Taking it up.]

Ha! This Paper—

Now your Decrees, ye Fates; then learn to bear them.

Reads.

"It is resolv'd. No human Aid can save him.

"And CONSTANTINE must die. This Night he dies."

[Throws away the Paper.]

Ye Powers, shall this Intelligence be lost?
Angels, and Ye, who guard the Throne of Princes,
This Night, be watchful o'er your sacred Charge;
This Night, with stronger Pinions hover o'er him.
Let not Ambition, or Revenge approach him.
Now, now, they enter; now they rush upon him.

Ye

CONSTANTINE. 53

Ye conscious Stars, that view the impious Scene,
Dart all your baleful Influence, and blast
Yon lifted Arm. But, oh! the conscious Stars,
The smiling Fiends, and weeping Angels see it—
The Lord of Empire dies.

*[Falls into the Arms of her Attendants,
and is carried out.]*

ALBINUS, *aside.*

Now, by the God,
Who thus inspires her, 'tis a glorious Vision,
Methinks, I see it too.

Enter MAXIMIAN.

MAXIMIAN.

Where is the Emperor?

Retir'd to his Apartment?

ALBINUS.

Yes, my Lord.

MAXIMIAN.

Retir'd? alone? What hinders then, ALBINUS,
But that I rush upon him, and at once
Strike for Revenge and Empire? How th' Idea
Glows thro' my Blood, My Rage already stabs him,

ALBINUS,

My Lord, another Hour—

MAXIMIAN.

Another Hour!

What! To behold my Daughter at my Feet,
Imploring me to save her Fame, her Innocence!
Thou canst not judge of Nature's Workings here.
Thou hast no Child. Shame, Indignation, Pity—
But they shall now be satisfied with Vengeance.

[Going out to CONSTANTINE's Apartment.]

54. CONSTANTINE.

ALBINUS.

Who waits there?

Enter Officers, &c.

[*Guards arrest the Prince* MAXIMIAN.

MAXIMIAN.

Arrest me, Villain! Ha! Thou double Traytor!
Soldiers, I charge you, bear me to the Emperor.

ALBINUS.

Behold th' Imperial Signet, and obey it,
Or Woe upon your Lives. This Instant bear him
To his Apartment.

[*The Guards carry off* MAXIMIAN.

This the only Means

To save him from himself; his own wild Temper.

I now am equal Master of the Fate

Of both these Princes. If th' Imperial Throne—

Suppose it vacant—ROME hath seen her Emperors,

And of no Godlike Strain. O Fortune, Fortune!

If I durst follow, where thy Favour leads—

Down, down, thou swelling Spirit, proud Ambition,

Nor let thy wandering Fires mislead my Reason.

[*Exit,*

FIFTH



FIFTH ACT.

MAXIMIAN, *and* ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

YOU see the strong Necessity.

MAXIMIAN.

I do,

And thank thy friendly Care.

ALBINUS.

That Moment's Rashness—

It was not less, my Lord—with sure Destruction
Had blasted all our Hopes. But now your Fortune
Comes smiling forward. All your Friends engag'd
To catch th' Alarm, and spread its Terrors round,
I have dispatch'd MARCELLUS to the Legions,
To hold them firm, and promise them such Presents—

MAXIMIAN.

Larger than NERO gave; with the rich Plunder
Of this new Town, its Temples, Shrines, and Saints,
And all their Worshippers. But why MARCELLUS?
A Trust of such Importance!—Why a Christian?
A Traitor to his Country, and its Gods.

ALBINUS.

You know, my Lord, how numerous these Enthusiasts
Thro' ail our Troops; you know his Influence o'er them.
My Life upon his Truth; or were he false,
He could not hurt us now. The Palace ours,
Its sleeping CONSTANTINE, and—hark, my Lord,

[It thunders,

56 CONSTANTINE.

Are not the Gods, who roll these awful Sounds,
Are they not ours ?

MAXIMIAN.

Yes ; 'Tis the Voice of Jove,
Speaking his own Omnipotence. Again
That Peal of Glory ! These well-omen'd Thunders,
Like Drums and Trumpets in the Day of Battle,
Shall drown the Cries of Death.

ALBINUS.

Seize the glad Omen,
There lies your Way to Empire, and to Fame.
Go ; and return an Emperor.

MAXIMIAN.

An Emperor !

Oh ! for a Moment, to enjoy th' Idea.
To see the Roman Senate, once the Dread,
The Gods, of Earth ; to see the haughty Flatterers,
As insolent, as abject, kneel before me ;
Then, with a Look to kill ; like CAIUS MARIUS,
To nod a Senator to Death, or Exile—
AURELIAN, then thy Perfidy—

ALBINUS.

My Lord—

MAXIMIAN.

I thank thee, Friend ; it was an idle Rapture,
But yet transporting too. Now, fare thee well.
Tho' my Heart's high in Hope, yet should I fail,
Be this our last Embrace—

ALBINUS.

My Lord ; my Sovereign—

MAXIMIAN.

Of Friendship and Esteem. This pealing Thunder
Calls me again. Yes, CONSTANTINE, I go
To prove whose Gods are mightier, yours or mine.

CONSTANTINE.

57

Your newly fabled Race, or those, who rais'd
Old Rome to Glory. Ha! Look there ALBINUS,
Do my Eyes dazzle, and my old Brain turn?
A stream of sulphur'd Fire—See, where it rolls!
And now, 'tis dash'd by a strong Wave of Blood!
Spectres, and hideous Fiends, and shapeless Forms
With ghastly Smiles invite me to go on.
And now they dart their Hissings thro' my Brain,

ALBINUS.

Your agitated Fancy—'tis no more.
Perhaps, some wandering Phantoms of the Night,

MAXIMIAN.

How little do they know MAXIMIAN's Soul!
Were all the Crimes of Human-Kind upon it,
Thus would I plunge into the burning Wave,
And breast the fiery Surge, to seize my Vengeance.

[Exit as to CONSTANTINE's Apartment.

ALBINUS.

What could it mean! Such strongly imag'd Terrors?
More than Imagination shook his Brain.
But all is silent yet. Ye rapid Moments,
That carry Doubt and Fear upon your Flight,
How slowly do ye move! What Noise was that!

[MAXIMIAN returns.

MAXIMIAN.

Is there Light i'th' Chamber?

ALBINUS.

No, my Lord.

He had me leave him to his Shame, and Darkness.

[Exit MAXIMIAN.

ALBINUS.

Why this Return? Was it not most ill-omen'd!
Why did I trust his old, unfinew'd Arm?
I ought myself—it is not yet too late—

Should

58 C O N S T A N T I N E.

Should he awake—the double Noise may wake him—
By all the Gods MAXIMIAN's Voice, and loud—

MAXIMIAN *behind the Scenes.*

This for Ambition ; this for my Revenge ;
This for my Daughter's Wrongs.

ALBINUS.

O glorious Sounds !

Worthy the Voice of Jove !

Enter MAXIMIAN, his Sword bloody.

MAXIMIAN.

'Tis done. Behold
The Blood, that ere these humbler, Christian Doctrines,
Drew its rich Stream from Jove,

ALBINUS,

All hail, MAXIMIAN,
Master of human Kind !

MAXIMIAN.

He struggled strongly !

For thrice he rose, when this old, faithful Arm,
Not yet by Years, nor Idleness enfeebled,
Thrice struck my Victim down ; as in the Field,
When younger Spirits filled my glowing Veins,
I smote the Gaul, who with gigantick Strength,
Defied the Tents of Rome.

ALBINUS.

An Act of Glory,
Rome's Annals make immortal. But that Sword,
AURELIAN gave you in Exchange for yours,
Left in the Bed, beyond a thousand Witnesses
Will prove the Deed upon him ; then, at Leisure,
Under the legal Forms of Public Justice,
You may command his Death.

MAX-

CONSTANTINE, 59

MAXIMIAN.

I'll leave it there.

I brought it forth, to see what richer Drops
Fed the proud Heart, whose Insolence once aw'd me,
Whose Spirit tow'r'd above me. Oh! ALBINUS,
I am almost asham'd, even yet, to tell you,
How oft, as if in some superior Presence,
My Soul hath bow'd before him, and my Blood
Run aw-struck to my Heart.

ALBINUS.

Well has this Night

Repaid his Insolence. But now, my Lord,
Retire to Rest, and when th' Alarm begins,
Be not too suddenly awak'd. Then rouse you
In all your wonted Majesty. Assume
Th' Imperial Purple, as your proper Right,
And join, with pious Zeal, the Public Sorrows.
Order his Funeral with a Pomp of Honours,
And rank him with the Gods.

MAXIMIAN.

This vile Dissembling!

When shall my Soul resume its native Greatness?
And yet Tiberius blush'd; even Nero wept,
And mightiest Cæsar, in his Height of Empire,
Trembled, with Art, before the Roman Talker.
Spite of these great Examples, let MAXIMIAN
Rise like the Sun, and hold his Course of Glory,
With Majesty unclouded, unobscur'd.
Then shew at Evening, like the setting God,
A larger Orb, tho' with less Heat it shine.

[Exit.

ALBINUS.

This is the Hour of Rest; but not for me;
Not 'till another Death secure my Safety.

60 C O N S T A N T I N E.

This fond old Man, shall for an idle Tear,
Drop'd from a Woman's Eye, forget my Services.
She must not live—why should the wretched live?

[Looking at her entering.]

And such thou art—a very Wretch indeed.
But thou art near the End of thy Afflictions.

[Exit.]

FULVIA, CORNELIA.

CORNELIA,

They were the Groans of Death, its sharpest Pangs,
And, wafted on the hollow Gloom of Night,
Broke thro' th' affrighted Air.

FULVIA.

Then, then, CORNELIA,

The Majesty of Nations, and their Praise,
Expiring groan'd in Death; yet Heaven could roll
Its idle Noise, and the pale Lightnings flash'd
Their harmless Fires; perhaps, with impious Light,
Directed to the Deed. He died, CORNELIA,
And thought his FULVIA false.

CORNELIA.

Ah! yet retire.

As we advance among these pathless Terrors,
Your Eye grows wilder, and in broken Pantings
Your quick Breath heaves. Should you see aught more
dreadful,

Will not Imagination catch its Horrors,
Strike the weak Sense, and fright it into Madness?

FULVIA.

No; my CORNELIA, no. I'll not run mad.
What tho' my Brain's on Fire; my glowing Eyes
Just starting from their Orbs, and every Sense

Confus'd

C O N S T A N T I N E. 61

Confus'd and wild, yet why should I run mad?
 'Tis not to tear this Hair; to shriek with Pain,
 To rend these Eye-balls from their bleeding Rings,
 And dash them rayless to their native Earth,
 That can express my Grievs. Why, then, run mad?

CORNELIA,

Ye pitying Powers——

FULVIA.

You talk'd of pathless Terrors.
 Is not Despair my Guide, and see, CORNELIA,
 Faithful it points to yonder open Door.
 There Treason enter'd; there the Man of Blood——
 And there I'll enter too.
 Blood! Blood! CORNELIA. See the gory Steps,
 Where Murder stalk'd along. Now, now, ye Powers,
 In Mercy, Justice, Anger, Pity, strike
 This Head devoted; lest in desperate Frenzy,
 I should give Way to Horror, and perform
 The ever damning Deed of Self-Destruction.

Enter ALBINUS.

CORNELIA *to* ALBINUS.

If you have ever known, where Pity dwells,
 That drops the tender Tears o'er others' Woes;
 If you've an human Heart, oh! Sir, assist me.

FULVIA *breaking away from* CORNELIA.

Or as you seem a Dæmon of the Night,
 Presiding o'er the Terrors, you have rais'd,
 If you know aught of my lov'd Lord, Oh! tell me;
 If you are privy to his Death, Oh! tell me.
 Give me his mangled Corse, deform'd with Wounds,
 Besmear'd with Blood, and Death's own Paleness on it,
 I'll o'er it play a Scene of such wild Sorrows——

Such

62 C O N S T A N T I N E.

Such Frenzy, such Distraction, as shall charm you
To shed a human Tear, and think of Pity.

ALBINUS.

Of that I question. But my present Hours
Have other Cares. This Night your Lord, your Em-
peror

Began to be immortal. Ere he went
To take his Throne among his kindred Gods,
(We shall to-morrow deify his Virtues)
He left a Present for his much-lov'd FULVIA;
That noble Choice of Death.

Enter a Soldier with a Dagger and a Bowl of Poison.

FULVIA.

Oh! truly welcome,
Thou Freedom of the Soul, at whose great Bidding
Th' immortal Spirit wings its gladsome Way,
Throws off its Earth, and sports without its Weight
In yonder Fields of Light. There mine, perhaps,
May meet my Lord, cloth'd with ethereal Brightness;
How the World shrinks, with all its vast Ambition,
Its little Greatness at a Thought like this.

[Taking the Bowl.]

Now, thou immortal Spirit of my Lord,
In whatsoever Orb of Light enthron'd,
Look down upon me, your suspected FULVIA.
This to our second Nuptial Day in Heaven.

*[As she is going to drink CONSTANTINE enters
with AURELIAN, MARCELLUS. &c.]*

[Guards seize ALBINUS.]

CONSTANTINE.

Is it then given me, ye all-gracious Powers,
Once more to gaze upon thy Beauty's Wonders!
While Love—for, oh! the Rage of Jealousy,

Even

CONSTANTINE. 63

Even Madness self was Love——now cover'd o'er
With Blushes, with Confusion, kneels before thee.

[*He kneels.*]

FULVIA.

Restor'd to Life! Can Miracles do this?

[*CONSTANTINE rises.*]

'Tis he; 'tis he! My living Lord, my Emperor!
For, oh, my Heart, I feel thy wonted Transports,
Which he alone, the Lord of Love, inspires.

CONSTANTINE.

Oh! excellent in Goodness! My AURELIAN,
Behold, and wonder at the bright Perfection.

[*To FULVIA.*]

He too forgives, O generous Proof of Friendship,
The Outrage to his Virtue. See MARCELLUS,
And know my Safety thence. ALBINUS thought him
Firm to their Cause, and sent him to the Legions,
To gain their Strength. He thence returned at Night;
Came by the secret Way to my Apartment,
And told to my astonish'd Ears such Horrors——
Then begg'd, in Proof of his Fidelity,
To lay a Slave, who was this Morn condemn'd,
In th' Imperial Bed. MAXIMIAN's Rage
Declares the rest.

FULVIA.

MAXIMIAN's Sir! MAXIMIAN's!

CONSTANTINE *pointing to ALBINUS.*

Hence with that Slave, and bear him to his Fate.

[*ALBINUS carried out.*]

FULVIA.

But, Sir, my Father—Speak; Oh! Look upon me.
Oh! Hear these speechless Sorrows; hear and pity me.

CON-

64 C O N S T A N T I N E.

CONSTANTINE.

With all the fearful Tenderness of Love ;
With Eyes, that flow in Pity ; with a Tongue,
That falters to pronounce it——can I speak it ?
The Justice of the World demands his Fate.

[*As commanding him to go.*

MARCELLUS, tho' I know th' ungrateful Office—

FULVIA *kneeling.*

Oh ! for his Sake, th' eternal Power of Mercy,
Who when thy great Heart's quell'd by Age or Sick-
ness,

Shall hear thy Weakness, hear thy Cries of Pain,
Give me my Father's Life. This Day has join'd
My Fame to his Misfortunes. Should he perish,
Oh ! will it not be said, that I betray'd him ?

And, can you, Sir, behold me ; can you make me
A Name of horrid Parricide for ever ?

To all succeeding Times ? Unnumber'd Ages
Shall curse your FULVIA's Memory.

[*To MARCELLUS.*

Stay ; oh ! stay.

I see soft Pity drop the saving Tear——

[*To MARCELLUS.*

A little Moment more——and CONSTANTINE
Becomes a God of Mercy.

CONSTANTINE.

Is there a Strength in Man, that can resist
The Power of Beauty, when it pleads its Tears.

Go, my AURELIAN, and relieve his Terrors ;

Sooth his Despair, his disappointed Rage :

Affure him of his Life, nor Life alone,

But grac'd with Honors, worthy of our Friendship.

My FULVIA shall be Mistress of his Fate.

[*Exit AURELIAN.*

FULVIA.

CONSTANTINE. 65

FULVIA.

Angels of Mercy, hear the sacred Sounds,
That bid my Father live.
And thou, O Love, in all thy golden Records,
For it is thine, preserve this Act of Wonder,
And on thy purple Pinions waft it wide
O'er Earth and Heaven, the Glory of thy Reign.

Enter MAXIMIAN and AURELIAN at the Top of the Stage.

MAXIMIAN speaking as he comes forward.

Well then ; the Gods have otherwise decreed ;
And be it so. MAXIMIAN shall appear,
(I thank thee, Jove ; the Trial's worthy of me)
In his own Strength ; superior to his Fortune,
And CÆSAR'S haughty Clemency.

[To AURELIAN.

—Lead on.

FULVIA.

My Father—

MAXIMIAN.

How that Name comes o'er my Heart !
She kneels and weeps ! Art thou so wondrous good ?
Can'st thou forgive me, FULVIA ; call me Father,
And give me back thy Love ? Did not my Rage
Accuse thy Innocence, and blast thy Fame ?

FULVIA.

It was Ambition's Rage ; no more remember'd.
But even Ambition shall be satisfied.
Greatness and Power, for CONSTANTINE hath spoke it,
Duty and Love, shall wait upon your Age,
Till Time, with lenient Hand, shall lay it down

F

In

66 C O N S T A N T I N E.

In honourable Death ; 'till Fame shall crown
Your Life, and that last Hour with equal Glory.

MAXIMIAN.

If Life could pass away in the Delight
Of fondly gazing on thee ; could th' Idea
Of that full Sway, which aw'd the western World,
Be ever from my Memory ; could I forget
I was an Emperor once, dispensing Fame,
Greatness and Honors round me, then, perhaps,
I might forget, I liv'd to be forgiven,
And bow'd me to the Power, that gave me Life.

CONSTANTINE.

It shall not need——

MAXIMIAN.

Indeed, my Lord, it shall not.

MAXIMIAN better shall consult his Glory.

Your Father, Sir, depos'd me ; not by War,
By the fair Fortune of th' embattled Field,
But by his better Arts, and skill in Treaties,
Arts, which I boasted not ; but yet it joy'd
My gloomy Soul, to think I should repay them
With equal Vengeance. Thence my haughty Spirit
Stoop'd to the Baseness of a midnight Murder.
You now would give me Life—to crown that Gift
An honourable Share of Power and Greatness.
Now mark a Generosity above thee ;
Take from this Hand th' unrival'd Throne of Power,
The undivided Empire of the World,

[Stabs himself.]

For my last Groan gives you the Universe.

CONSTANTINE.

Oh ! FULVIA—but I'll not insult thy Sorrows,
By talking Comfort to them. Yet remember,

CONSTANTINE. 67

Why we are placed thus high ; not to exempt us
From human Woes, but that the World may learn
A nobler Fortitude by our Example,

To wake the Soul to Virtue, and impart
A warmer Spirit to the languid Heart,
The Passions were design'd ; but here behold

[Looking back to the Scenes,

Wild when they Rage, by reason uncontroul'd,

Less rapid is the Storm's destructive Sway,

While Guilt, Remorse, Despair, and Ruin mark their
Way.



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